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## NOTES ON THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

MY title sounds presumptuous. It is not, however, presumptuously meant. I merely wish to indicate the limits of my intention. It would be foolish and unnecessary on my part to attempt to give any systematic representation of the religious doctrine contained in the Fourth Gospel. In the case of St. Paul it was almost obligatory, even to a writer who was bold enough to print his first impressions, to cast them into the form of exposition. The readers for whom he specially wrote were not only, as he imagined, unfamiliar with the actual wording of the Pauline Epistles, but from upbringing, association and temperament, were unable, without effort and assistance, to understand or appreciate their meaning. On the other hand, though the Epistles of Paul are not fully to be explained or understood without a study of the religious and intellectual environment of their author, they can, nevertheless, to some extent be expounded from themselves, or, at any rate, from data known to the average Jewish reader of magazines. But as regards the Fourth Gospel the case is different in both directions. It is at once harder and easier than the Epistles. Let a fairly-cultivated Jew, ignorant of the New Testament (the two qualifications are at present quite compatible), read the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans, and I believe his main sensation will be one of bewilderment; let him read the Fourth Gospel, and he will at all events *think* he understands a fair amount of it. Moreover, in a sort of way he will understand it; for the oppositions between "spirit" and "flesh," or "of this world" and "not of this world," the metaphorical and spiritual use of words like "bread," "light,"

"life," and many others, have become familiar to him in other ways. Yet, *per contra*, he who would fully understand "St. John" must understand two of his predecessors. It is true that the Jewish outsider can *partially* understand and *partially* appreciate the Fourth Gospel far more readily than he can appreciate and understand St. Paul. And yet *properly* to understand that Gospel you must in the first place understand Paul. And, secondly, to properly understand that Gospel you must be acquainted with and even understand Philo. But Philo, though, as I imagine, no savour of unorthodoxy attaches to his name, is necessarily no more than a name to all but the professed student.

It would not be difficult to assign other reasons for the comparative comprehensibility of the Fourth Gospel, in spite of its dependence upon two obscure or even unknown quantities. For one thing there is the style so lucidly clear and simple, so different from the involved and excited utterances of Paul. Then, again, just because the Fourth Gospel is so much further removed from Judaism, it is easier for a Jew to understand it. The period of conflict and creation is nearly over; the Gentile Church is fully formed. The Law is no longer a burning question; the opposition of faith and works, no longer prominent, is even partially reconciled, for "faith" has become the supreme "work." The Pauline paradoxes have done their duty; they have been absorbed and disappeared. In spite of the subject and its tragedy, we have passed into a serener air. Again, as the books on "St. John" fully explain, the death of Christ is no longer the main feature of the Gospel. There is a sense in which that death and its effects are still a stumbling-block to the Jew, even as they were when first enunciated by the daring genius of St. Paul—a stumbling-block in two senses: impossible to accept, difficult to appreciate or understand.

Once more putting questions of authorship on one side, there seems much more agreement among theologians

as regards the Fourth Gospel than as regards St. Paul. There seems less room for endless diversities of interpretation. Even on the critical side the commentators on St. Paul differ a good deal one from the other, so that much time is taken up by one man in pointing out the degrees of error in others. But in explaining St. John, the exponents of the critical school show a much greater unanimity. Of course, there are varieties, and you learn things in one book which you do not find in another. Still the views of Pfleiderer, and Thoma, and the two Holtzmann's, and Scholten, and Martineau, and Cone, all bear a very marked likeness to each other; and there is a fair amount of repetition as you pass from the first book to the second, and from the second to the third and fourth. The consequence is that anybody who will work a little at Philo, should be able with the help of some two or three of these scholars to get a very fair idea of the contents of the Fourth Gospel.

A principal question which I have set before myself in reading, and in reading about, the "Gospel according to St. John" is, What is the religious value of this book to those who have not been brought up in Christianity, and who do not believe in some of its most distinctive dogmas? What is its religious value to the average modern Jew?

For a Jew to ask this question is partly but not entirely equal to asking without qualifications "What is the religious value of the Fourth Gospel?" Such an identification is only conceited in appearance. Each one of us in estimating the religious worth of another creed, is bound to regard his own belief to a considerable extent as a fixed standard of value. The Christian judges Buddhism favourably by its real or supposed resemblances to Christianity, and so on. But this identification need not and should not be complete. To the more philosophic believer at any rate, no religion (his own included) is ever perfect, and none is without its partial though perhaps temporary defects. One religion may be onesided in one respect, a second

in another. A third may have the defects of its qualities. The exaggerations of one religion may be of a certain use to the opposite exaggerations of another. It is, therefore, quite possible that certain points in the Fourth Gospel, themselves perhaps not wholly true or accurate, may be of religious value to a Jew. He may realize their onesidedness, while they help him to correct his own.

It must at once be allowed that this method of approaching the Fourth Gospel is the one of all others which would probably be least sympathetic to its author. I *assume* that the main contention of the Gospel—the contention or argument laid down in its opening prologue (*e.g.*, i. 1-14) or in its closing verse (xx. 31)—is false: and then I coolly proceed to ask, What is its religious value? As the believer would answer, "Infinite," so might he maintain that the unbeliever must answer, "Nil." For the object of the Gospel is not to teach ethics; it is not to teach any aspect of religion, or any phase of the spiritual or moral life, which may be independent of or only mediately connected with its supreme and central propositions, that the Eternal and Divine Word became flesh, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As Thoma most rightly says, "*Die Lehre des Johannesevangeliums ist eigentlich nichts anderes als Christologie*,"<sup>1</sup> "The doctrine of the Fourth Gospel is pure Christology." Does it not seem ridiculous that any one should find religious value in a book the essential and all-pervading object of which he, *ab initio*, assumes to be untrue? If we want a florilegium of ethical and religious sayings, we should go elsewhere than to the Fourth Gospel, where almost every verse is made subservient to and dependent on the main doctrine and purport of the whole. "Take away the *Godhead* of Christ," says Dr. Martineau, "and there is not an incident or a speech in the Fourth Gospel which does not lose its significance."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thoma, *Die Genesis des Johannes-Evangeliums*, 1882, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, 1890, p. 426.

What, then, can be the value of this book to the Unitarian or the Jew? Is it not almost an affront to the book and almost an insult to its author to ask the question, when you defiantly shut your ears to the very thing they have to say? Yet the Unitarian, Dr. Martineau, can find in this same Gospel at least "one vital element" of permanent value. And so, perhaps, may a Jewish reader, though (putting the central proposition on one side) he finds some things that are ethically and spiritually dangerous, and as he hopes erroneous, find also others which are ennobling, beautiful and true.

Few persons, at any rate, be their religion what it may, can read the Fourth Gospel through without yielding to its spell. Few persons, I imagine, can remain proof to its remarkable fascination. May I briefly indicate wherein probably (to the outsider) the causes of this fascination consist?

First of all there comes the beauty of the manner, apart from the matter of the book. Its simplicity and elevation of style, the sustained dignity and, occasionally, the dramatic power, all hold the interest of the reader. The greatest subjects in heaven or on earth are dealt with, and while the sentences are clear and unadorned, the sense of grandeur is usually well maintained. We feel that we are reading the work of a genius, and, moreover, the work of one who has full control over his material, his thought and his words. How delightfully the shortness and pointedness of St. John contrast with the diffuse rhetoric of Philo. The very same ideas sometimes offend us in the one writer which charm us in the other. A single crisp verse takes the place of pages of involved and florid rhetoric. The taste of the one was doubtless excellent for his own age and environment; the taste of the other still seems excellent to our own. A thought strangely expressed in Philo fails to arrest our attention. The same thought in the Fourth Gospel compels reflection or astonishment. Again, the Fourth Gospel, like so many other books, both of the

Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, is alone of its kind. It is very short; but there is no other book exactly resembling it. Like the Prophets, the Psalms, or the Epistles of St. Paul, it has a uniqueness and isolation of its own.

But these reasons have only skimmed the surface. Others lie deeper. Most fairly cultivated persons, who are not naturally indifferent to one important side of our complex humanity, will be attracted by the spirituality of the book, by its idealism. This Fourth Gospel has, I suppose, gone a good way to form the religious consciousness of civilised humanity such as it now exists, and we have not yet, I imagine, got beyond—it may be hoped that we never shall get beyond—these oppositions between the seen and the unseen, the outward and the inward, the flesh and the spirit, which our Gospel has helped to make a permanent item in the forms and categories of cultivated, and even uncultivated, thought. When Plato talks about the true beauty and the true goodness, unseen and yet real, more real far than the world of sense, when he speaks of a life that is death, and of a death that may be life, though his ideals be often “vacant forms of light,” they will always awaken a sympathetic response from our higher nature—a yearning, sometimes vague and untutored, but not phantastic or spectral, towards a truth and goodness of which we could not dream if they were not real. So with the Fourth Gospel. On the purely religious side it has been the great source for those spiritual antitheses and truths with which mankind is now familiar. And great primal phrases such as “God is a spirit,” the “Bread of Life,” “Peace not as the world giveth,” in their striking simplicity and at their fountain source, will always, I should imagine, continue to attract and fascinate the spiritual and religious consciousness of man. Connected with this spirituality, or only another expression of it, is the symbolic language of the Gospel. As artistic limits of length and degree are not outstripped, the double meaning with which the actions and words of

Christ are often charged cannot fail to cause pleasure and profit. The scene where Christ washes his disciples' feet is in itself striking and beautiful, but its inner and symbolic meanings, half concealed and half revealed, add materially to its effect. As sometimes we feel that the respondents in the Platonic dialogues are made to misapprehend the meaning of the questions too clumsily, so sometimes the gross misconceptions of Christ's auditors are exaggerated in the Gospel. But the spiritual use of such words as light and darkness, slavery and freedom, bread and water, life and death, through their very background of material application, moves our admiration and quickens our discernment. The spirituality of the Gospel liberates and appeals to what is spiritual in ourselves; we are not reminded of or impelled to any particular duty, but we are rendered alert and responsive to that ever-recurrent opposition of sense and spirit, on which much that is best and noblest in life seems to depend. There is a possible danger in this. A mere tickling of the spiritual instincts, a mere spiritual palpitation, may be of little use or even of positive harm to our moral nature, and may not make us fulfil the better, but even the worse, our definite duties and obligations. It is much better to fulfil these well and not to appreciate the ethereal spirituality of the Fourth Gospel, than to succeed in the latter and to fail in the former. Moreover these sundered capacities are quite possible and probably not unfrequent. But the fascination, beyond which at this stage I should perhaps not have gone, is independent of the question of ethical profit and loss.

What has been said of the spirituality and symbolism of the Fourth Gospel applies in even greater measure to its mysticism. Putting aside the religious *value* of mysticism, whether generally or for the average modern Jew, there can be no question of the fascination which mystic religious sentiment, if expressed with adequate simplicity and conciseness, exercises upon the mind and the feelings. These qualifications are eminently complied with in the Fourth



Gospel. The eternal need of a God within as well as a God without, of breaking down or bridging over the gulf which seems to separate the human from the divine, and of yet maintaining the separateness and "personality" of both—these needs are felt and realised in the Fourth Gospel with considerable power and penetration, and for the believer of its main hypotheses, they are largely satisfied and appeased.

To these causes of fascination there may perhaps be added, not only the beautiful use of the ideas of love and sacrifice, a use so beautiful that we are apt to overlook the limitation of their range, but also the fact, however unconscious the average reader may be of it, that the author of the Fourth Gospel is a philosopher, and that his book is a form of popularised, or rather religionised, philosophy, transfigured by his genius and by his faith. The simplicity of this Gospel is not the simplicity of nature. It is the elaborate simplicity of art. It is carefully wrought out and worked up. Even while we admire, we feel that our admiration puts us into the category and fold of the elect. We are initiated into the mystery, and those who accept the Gospel become, as it were, the chosen few out of the condemned mass—in the world, but not of the world. Unconsciously to ourselves we philosophise, and this philosophy may truly be called divine. More even than with Plato, we are elevated and carried out of ourselves. In Plato we are invited to side with Socrates; in the Fourth Gospel we are invited to side with Christ. The distinction fascinates. We seem to breathe a purer and rarer air, and this higher atmosphere quickens and gladdens us. We are free and even bidden to enter within the holy place, to take our seats and be enrolled in the spiritual aristocracy of the world.

Such might be said to be some of the causes of that fascination which the Gospel of St. John is likely to exercise upon most cultivated and religious minds even outside the pale of believing Christianity. And these

causes of its fascination are partly the causes of its abiding religious value. Nevertheless, emotional fascination is one thing, critical appreciation is another. And upon this a due appraising of the Fourth Gospel must largely depend.

Religious belief, while not without its intellectual basis, is notoriously different from belief in matters of science or history. I believe that in the year 841 A.D. a battle was fought at Fontenay. Firmly as I believe this, it has not, as an isolated fact, any effect upon my thought, feelings, character, actions, happiness, or power. I believe that there is a good God in the ordinary sense of that word; or I believe that there is a devil into whose power I may fall for all eternity, or I believe that an aspect of God became flesh at a particular time, and while I believe these things to be facts, just as true as the occurrence of the battle of Fontenay in the year 841, they may also have a tremendous effect upon my life and character.

The power and influence of true belief are intensely prominent in the Fourth Gospel. In its emphatic insistence on truth, as in its frequent use of the very word, it is at once separated from the Synoptics (*ἀληθεία* occurs between twenty and thirty times in John, once in Matthew). The true knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, his Son, is in itself eternal life: the lack, still more the rejection, of that knowledge, is in itself the absence or the forfeiture of that life. The whole man is transformed by his belief.

We shall, I think, find that the Fourth Evangelist goes beyond even this, and here we shall probably part company with him. To all Jews, presumably to all liberal Christians, the action of God on man is not determined by the accuracy of his belief about God. We do not believe that the relation of God to man is different in the case of a Jew and in the case of a Christian. We realize that varying religious beliefs may and do have varying effects upon character, but so far as God is con-

cerned we do not believe that he has other laws of influence and judgment for those who believe concerning him more truly or less truly, or even for those who have failed to find him altogether. Least of all do we believe that these variations of belief affect the destiny of the soul beyond the grave. And in these negations, which can also be presented as the most solemn affirmations, we find comfort and consolation, even as we find glory and rest. But inconsistently, as we believe, with the justice of God and the universalism of his providence, the author of the Fourth Gospel did presumably believe that the result of true belief is not merely the moral and spiritual transformation of the believer, but the bestowal on him by God as a gift of his grace, the prerogative of eternal life, the special influx of the divine spirit.

Once more. Not merely is it true that religious belief may ethically transform, but it is also true that the essential character of your belief, as realised and appropriated by you, is partly dependent upon your prior or present ethical condition. The interaction and interrelation of morality and religion are notoriously complex in the extreme. Every man, good or bad, is at once capable of believing that a great battle was fought at Fontenay in 841. As the belief in the battle has no effect upon him hereafter, so it makes no demand upon him beforehand. But the belief in God—and here is one aspect of its solemnity—is not as easy as the belief in the battle. At all events there is, I apprehend, a sense in which it is true to say, that though a scamp can believe in God as well as a saint, his belief must be of a different texture and complexion. He may believe; he cannot realise. He may say that he believes in communion with God, but that belief in it which is more than verbal, because based on experience and feeling, he cannot possibly possess. Without goodness a man cannot sound the depths of belief in God. A man may be very good, and not believe in God—and this is where the Johannine writers (like Philo)

were naturally in the wrong—but he cannot adequately realise God and not be good. “He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.” It is a great saying.

While we shall have to reject the Fourth Gospel’s dualism, and its identification of the good man and the believer, we must always bear in mind that it was written when Christianity was still comparatively new, and fresh adult adherents, drawn from Paganism, were continually coming in. We can hardly appreciate the ethical effect which the discarding of heathenism, and the adoption of Christianity, may have had upon such persons. The recollection of it may also serve to partly excuse the peculiar dogma of the Evangelist, that he who rejected Christianity was morally bad. Among ourselves religion and morality grow up together, and their intermixture and interaction are far more subtle and complicated than anything which the writer of the Fourth Gospel could possibly have conceived.

Proceeding now from these points of view to the main religious ideas of this remarkable book, we perceive that what it contains is a new revelation of God in his own nature and in his relation to man. And by God must be also included those other aspects or phases of him, which are known as the Word or the Son, and as the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Truth. We are told that before the advent of the Incarnate Son none knew the Father, for none can come unto the Father but through the Son. So tremendous an assertion, that the true nature of God was unknown before Christ, makes us ask what fuller revelation of God is given in this Gospel than we had known before, whether through the Old Testament, Philo, or the Synoptics? Now, apart from the metaphysical question of a distribution of the divine nature and function among double or triple aspects within the Godhead itself, there is very little in the Fourth Gospel to make good this claim. There is, indeed, far less than in the Synoptics, where Jesus, with perhaps one exception, never casts so overwhelming a

disparagement upon the religious knowledge of the generations which had preceded him. We find one statement of grand simplicity and permanent value: "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." It cannot be said that the statement contains a truth which was wholly new, for it is already implied in Isaiah and Philo.<sup>1</sup> But in its setting, in its final overthrow of that dangerous localization of deity which still attached to the temple of Jerusalem, in its bold and distinct denial of the notion that God can be nearer to one spot than to another, its value is undoubted and abiding. It takes its place with the 139th Psalm as one of the great spiritual possessions of humanity. With this exception, the Fourth Gospel contains little that is of value to the outsider about God, even as regards the more metaphysical relations of his being. In v. 17: "My Father worketh until now," we get the idea of God's ceaseless activity, which, however, is more clearly enunciated by the Evangelist's predecessor, Philo.<sup>2</sup> On the moral side we notice that the appellation Father is used far more to mark the relation of God to the Word than to man. Scholten has pointed out that the use of the term is reserved for the Logos: man may be the *child* of God; Christ is his *son*.<sup>3</sup> Passing over the restricted character of God's beneficence, of which there will be more to say later on, it is also true, as Cone observes, that the Evangelist "shows no predilection for dwelling on the goodness and mercy of God, and in this respect he is not to be compared with some of the prophets and psalmists, and even with Philo."<sup>4</sup> It is not unnatural that the Jew, familiar with a catena of

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. Reuss: *Historie de la Théologie Chrétienne au siècle Apostolique*. Vol. II. p. 433.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. especially I. *Alleg.* III. (M. I. 44): "God never ceases to create, but as it is the property of fire to burn, and of snow to be cold, so also it is the property of God to create."

<sup>3</sup> Scholten: *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 1867, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Cone: *The Gospel and its earliest Interpretations*, p. 275. Why "even with Philo"?

the best and noblest sayings about God in those psalmists and prophets, rejects with something like indignation the right of the Fourth Evangelist, whose divine hero prays not for the world which he has come to save, to assert that the Father was not known before the coming of the Son, or to teach the Jew something more of the nature and goodness of God than he already knew and revered. If the Jesus of the Synoptics claims this right, there is something to be said for its accuracy. Challenged by the Fourth Gospel I deny it. But it must not be overlooked that the First Epistle of St. John has succinctly summed up in a single formula or epigram the ethical truths about the nature of God already enunciated by earlier writers. "God is love," on the ethical side, ranks worthily with "God is spirit," on the metaphysical side. For both we are grateful. But I have sometimes wondered whether, if goodness or righteousness had been used instead of love, and if it had been said, therefore, "God is righteousness," or "God is goodness," rather than "God is love," the religion of Christ would have been stained by so many sins and cruelties committed in his name. Perhaps, however, human nature, in its corruption and blindness, is indifferent to the meaning of words.

When we pass from God as he is in himself, to God in his relation to the world, we are at once plunged into the theory of the Logos. It is true that the Logos constitutes part of the eternal nature of God, as well as the predominant factor in his dealings with the universe; but to the Evangelist the importance of the Logos centres in its incarnation and in its relations with humanity. Consistently with my special purpose, I do not propose to give any analysis of the doctrine of the Logos or of its genesis. I am only concerned with its value. Seeing, then, that the doctrine may be represented as an adaptation of the Philonic theory to the person and story of Christ, we can hypothetically regard it under two aspects, distinguishable in our thought, though not in its author's,

first as a division or separation of the single Godhead into divers aspects or phases; secondly, as the incarnation of one particular aspect in the person of Christ.

Now to those who stand outside the Christian pale, these various aspects of God are only ideal. We make them for our purposes because we conceive that they may approximately answer to that which we think must be *included* in God's own nature, and in his relation to the world. With our human capacities and knowledge, we do not presume to take the immense further step of constructing any hypothesis as to the relation of these ideal aspects to each other. Most of us would, I think, feel that any introduction of such human relationships (for they can only be human) between the aspects of the one and only true God, would be an infringement of the Unitarian point of view, a violation of monotheistic purity. What we lose thereby in warmth and colour we gain in truth, sublimity and self-restraint.

But even the strictest monotheist may recognize that the ideal separation of the Divine unity into various aspects may have had in the past, and may have in the present, a religious value of its own. It is in the change of aspects into persons that the danger begins; in the second part of the Athanasian creed rather than in the first. For the theory of a Logos, or of a spirit, or of both, represents one way of realising to ourselves, whether popularly or philosophically, that relation of God to the world and to man which we not only *want* to be true, but which we also trust *is* true; that relation, in other words, which not only satisfies our feeling, but our thought. The metaphysical difficulties, for which the Logos seemed a solution to Philo, no longer press so hardly upon us. God in his lonely greatness must be kept apart from the world; God, in his perfect purity and abstractedness, is unapproachable and unknowable by man. And yet a way there must be in which God and the world, and God and man, must be brought together, just as a way there must

be in which the self-sufficing God must be conceived to have created both the world and man. These oppositions and difficulties, of which we can easily find traces in the Fourth Gospel, scarcely hamper and trouble us to-day as they troubled and hampered the Alexandrian divines and philosophers of eighteen hundred years ago. For one thing, we are less worried by the conception of matter as something in itself opposed or resistant to God. For another, we are perhaps less sensitive of logical difficulties in matters of religion, more willing to leave them unsolved, but to believe them soluble. But, perhaps, also, we are less easily taken in by the creations of our own thought. We do not suppose that we have really bridged the gulf or solved the puzzle by any theory of a Divine "Word" or a Divine "Spirit." We merely put back the difficulty another step. Just as, on the moral side, the theory of a devil, with which the Fourth Gospel thinks it can take away from God the responsibility of giving over to evil the souls which he himself has created, merely removes the problem in one form to raise it more sharply in another, so the theory of the Logos does not really *harmonise* the dual aspects of the Divine nature, it merely expresses them more clearly.

Nevertheless, a Logos theory is not an arbitrary and even immoral hypothesis like the theory of a devil. We feel that while God is omnipresent and infinite, he must also be self-conscious. Not less than "personal," we say, however much he may be more. He is something in himself, to himself, and for himself; above and beyond the world. We call him "transcendent." But then comes the recoil. He is also something for the world and for ourselves. We are not wholly without God. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" God is omnipresent. Moreover, there is reason *in* the world, and above all there is self-conscious reason in man. There is a relation, partly constant and partly variable—constant as regards God, variable as regards our-



selves—between us and him. He is “there,” though we see him not. He is within us, though he is also without. We grope for words to express this realised feeling and this believed truth. The psalmist speaks of the Holy Spirit within him; Philo speaks of the Logos. Some such hypothesis, some such method of verbally expressing in separate terms this aspect of the Divine, we may perhaps always stand in need of. It is possible that a too exclusive consideration of God as the transcendent cause (though not without its justification), a too complete avoidance of those other appellations of him, the manysided One, which the Hebrew Scriptures, the Alexandrian philosophers, and the older Rabbinical writers created or employed, may have reacted not without prejudice upon the religion of our later Judaism. It may to some extent have robbed us of those elements of “personal religion” which are partly conditioned, or, at least, aided by emphasizing more markedly, through the help of separate words and titles, the “immanent” aspect of God’s complex personality and being.

We feel at any rate that a theory such as that of the Logos has a distinct value in helping us to realize that aspect of God turned outwards to the world and to man, which seems as much a part of him as any other. Human thought and human love are not merely the gift of God, but as the product of reason are themselves partly divine. Man is created in the image of God, says Genesis: through thy light we see light, says the Psalter. We can commune with God and aspire towards him, because, in however fragmentary a degree, we are akin to him. And if akin to him, this means that there is a sense in which, though we are we and God is God, he may be said to be within us as we may also be said to be within him. “There is a sense” in which these seductive words have a meaning and a value: although let it never be forgotten that there is a sense, only too easily reached, in which they can become dangerous, immoral and untrue.

For these reasons such a theory as the Philonic Logos has not only an historical interest, but also, as I venture to think, something of permanent and religious value. Perhaps its value is not wholly out of relation to its vague and floating character, to its inconsistencies and contradictions. We feel that the theory cannot be hardened into a fixed dogma; it is always more or less metaphorical or symbolic—a way of expressing the inexpressible. For these reasons too the Logos of the Fourth Gospel may also have its value even to outsiders. Whether *for them* it has greater *religious* worth than the Logos of Philo may well be doubted. They cannot accept a human relationship between the two aspects of the one God, and therefore the love of the Father to the Son, and the love of the Son to the Father, however movingly and delicately expressed, is for them meaningless and inapposite. The single and complete incarnation of the Logos at a particular time and place gives the theory, to their eyes, something of that hard and fast character which the fluid nature of Philo's Logos avoids. Instead of a constant divine and spiritual operation, we have—at all events for the period of the incarnation—something mechanical, sensuous, spasmodic, magical. It seems as if the work of the Logos before Christ had been a failure, and a new and miraculous method was conceived as necessary. The gradual development of God's purpose in human history seems interrupted by a divine interposition, which comes athwart and between the relation of God to man both before it and after. Such considerations will seem both unphilosophic and unmeaning to those who take their stand upon the dogma of Christ's divinity; but I think they may partially explain the impression which that dogma makes upon those who have been from their very childhood brought up in a different environment and with different notions of the divine nature and rule.

If we pass to the relation of the Evangelist's Logos—that is, of Jesus Christ—to man, and of man to the Logos, we are immediately confronted by the intense Johannine

dualism. The main object of the incarnation is to save; but then there is only a certain number for whom salvation is possible. Those who are potentially good attend to the words of Christ, and believe in him and in his works; those who are potentially children of God, become so *de facto* by the life and death of the incarnate Logos and by the Spirit which he sends. But more than the children of God are the children of the Devil. For them no salvation is possible. Their life is no true "life," and with the end of their earthly existence their separate personality is concluded. For the children of God the "life eternal," begun on earth, is continued in heaven; for the children of this world, that is, for the children of the Devil, there would appear to be no hope. Their end is not eternal punishment, but sheer annihilation. In no other point is the Fourth Gospel more antipathetic to the outsider than in this. We object to this dualism, both in itself and in its test. That it is but the culmination of a tendency does not make it truer or more acceptable. There is a dualism discernible in the Psalter and in other portions of the Hebrew Scriptures; but it is not so theoretic and complete as the dualism of "St. John." It is more natural and ordinary; the dualism of the average hot-blooded patriot, not the thought-out dualism of the philosopher in his study. Jewish particularism is very objectionable; to identify the enemies of your people with the enemies of God, the Gentile with the wicked, is utterly repugnant to our modern notions of justice and religion. But this particularism was happily not part and parcel of the real Jewish creed. It could be, and has been, easily got rid of. The Johannine doctrine involves a particularism more deadly than the Jewish form of it, because it is more intertwined with the very essence of the Evangelist's creed, and receives a more theoretic and logical basis. It is, therefore, less easily got rid of.

Philo too teaches a dualism analogous to the dualism of "St. John." But as Réville, in his admirable pamphlet, *La doctrine du Logos dans la quatrième Evangile et dans les œuvres*

*de Philon*, has well pointed out, Philo's dualism is less sharply defined, less consistent and less irreversible. Between the two extremes there are various shades and modifications of character, partly inclining towards the flesh, partly aspiring towards God. Moreover Philo admits the possibility of a passage from one division to the other; he finds a place for Repentance. But in the Fourth Gospel, those who belong to Christ's flock believe and are saved, those who do not belong to it cannot believe. The "world" cannot receive the spirit: it knows him not. Those who are not of God cannot hear his words. He that is of the "earth" cannot receive that which comes from "heaven." The Fourth Gospel knows nothing of Repentance. The very word *μετάνοια* is not found in it. Those who receive the words of Christ no longer include a contingent of publicans and sinners; they are morally good.<sup>1</sup> A forgiveness of sins is only cursorily mentioned: it is inconsistent with the main doctrine, an importation from without, or rather a survival of a rejected element. It is true that the wrath of God abides on the unbeliever, but this would seem to be not so much because the unbeliever can help his unbelief, but because God, as pure light and goodness, must by his own nature be eternally hostile to what is corrupt, evil and diabolic. The intense dualism of the writer is finally and consummately revealed to us in the great prayer in the seventeenth chapter, where Christ is made to say, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." Surely the defenders of the Gospel's authenticity and historical character do Jesus of Nazareth an evil turn. Surely "I come to call sinners to repentance," "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," were more characteristic of the historic Jesus than all the elaborate speeches of "St. John."

For the exquisite beauty of the Fourth Gospel tends to

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Holtzmann, *Das Johannes Evangelium*, 1887, p. 89.

blind us to the full meaning and implication of its dualistic doctrine. We do not realise that all the love which God and the Logos, God's son, bear to the world is only to an elect portion, and that the sublimer pity of the Synoptic Gospel to the outcast and the sinner is wholly and necessarily wanting. Nor do we easily realise that the human reflection of that love is only to be exercised within the brotherhood of believers. If it be charged against the Rabbis—with some truth and with some falsehood—that they interpreted the love of one's neighbour enjoined in Leviticus to mean the love of one's fellow-Jew, it may with better accuracy be said that the love enjoined by the famous "new commandment" of St. John is restricted to fellows in faith. Is love restricted by race much more objectionable than love restricted by creed?

Moreover, the moving splendour and calm assurance of language, which adds so greatly to the Gospel's perennial charm, has tended to make men think that its dualism, if not justified in itself, was justified by the environment and age in which the author lived. I find this excuse for the Evangelist in Thoma,<sup>1</sup> and I find it also, where it seems far more surprising, in Dr. Martineau. He speaks of the "inevitable but imperfect dualism forced upon human thought by the contrasts of experience." "A new religion," he goes on to say,

gives birth to an entrancing affection, and, going apart with its own enthusiasm, sees all else at variance with it, and needing either conversion or rejection. It cannot live without its outcasts: the Israelite has his Gentiles: the apostle Paul his false "brethren," that "make the cross of Christ of none effect" through their "dead works"; and now the mysterious evangelist, who finds in union with Christ the whole spiritual distance annihilated between the life of man and God, looks upon a world made up of dissolute Paganism and embittered Judaism as in the mass delivered over to the power of evil. Between the low passions that reign there of greed and lust, of ambition and envy, and the aspirations and trust, the humility and love that breathe through the prayers and sweeten the inner life of a true Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Thoma, *Die Genesis des Johannes Evangeliums*, 1882, p. 283.

community, the contrast presents itself to him as little less than infinite ; so that only now does the genuine history of humanity open, with the planting of a sacred colony in the midst of the dark continent of earthly sin and shame.<sup>1</sup>

Now, in the first place, the immense ethical difference between "conversion" and "rejection" is somewhat ignored by their close juxtaposition in this passage ; but in the second, what right has Dr. Martineau even to *imply* that the world upon which the author of the Fourth Gospel "looked forth" was not only seemingly to the Evangelist, but *really* made up of a "dissolute paganism" and an "embittered Judaism"? Within the Christian pale, nought but aspirations and trust, humility and love ; without, nothing but greed and lust, ambition and envy ! At the very period when the Fourth Gospel was composed, Paganism was not without its spiritual revival and its ethical nobility. Surely there were many Pagans who rejected Christianity and yet led lives of purity and goodness ; and as for Judaism, was there no spirituality among its martyrs and heroes who perished in all the sublimity of perfect faith at the scaffold and by the sword ? It is a mournful fact that the good men among the Jews thought that the good men among the Christians were bad, and *vice versa* ; but it is still more mournful to perpetuate their error, and to think that either side could arrogate to itself an exclusive possession of goodness, humility and love.

A number of points relative to the moral and religious

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<sup>1</sup> *Seat of Authority*, p. 493. Still more one-sided is a passage on p. 434 : "This intense moral dualism in the Johannine writings, which allows no gradations, drives all antitheses into contradictions, and invokes God and devil to settle every disputed cause, doubtless indicates that the interval had become practically hopeless between the spiritual ideal of life and character reached by the Christian conscience, and the low types of motive and conduct into which the unconverted Judaism and heathenism had set." If one met this sentence in any unorthodox German Protestant divine, one would pay no notice. It seems to belong to their business to misrepresent Rabbinic Judaism ; it lies, perhaps, in their blood. But from the English Dr. Martineau it is amazing.

condition of the world before and at the advent of Christ are left obscure. Those who "come to the light," that is, believe in Christ, are good. Did then the Incarnation not increase the capacity of human goodness? Did it merely give the means of acquiring "truth," the chance of a fuller bliss, a purer enlightenment, but not the power of becoming more good? The command to love one another is described as new. Were then people not really good before Christ, but only potentially so, seeing that the only definition of goodness recognized by the Evangelist seems to be love? If they were in any true sense good, why should they have been in danger from the devil? The redemption of the good seems less urgent than the redemption of the evil, and yet the purpose of the Incarnation is for the sake of the good and not for the sake of the evil. The Logos shone into the world before it became flesh. The darkness did not apprehend it. But was that darkness universal both among the Jews and among the heathens? Were there good men who died before the Incarnation, and in what sense? What knowledge of God, what light had they, whether in Judæa or outside it? One of the best features in the Gospel is its universalism, for on this point the author is no inept disciple of St. Paul. Gentiles rather than Jews come readily to the light. Other sheep there are not of this fold. But what then of all the great mass of heathen who died before Christ came? Was the pre-Christian action of the Logos too feeble to generate in them the spiritual life? Was nobody born anew, or born from above, whether Gentile or Jew, in all that immense period of waiting and preparation? If yes, why did not this normal action of the Logos and the grace of God suffice? If not, and if no man was "spiritual," could any have been good? Are we to suppose that the new birth and the true goodness which it includes were coincident with Christ? And lastly, was everybody before Christ annihilated at death, or are we to

believe with Dr. Martineau that two or three obscure and doubtful passages refer to a resurrection and a judgment both of punishment and of reward for the endless generations of the dead?<sup>1</sup> Just in proportion as the Fourth Gospel leaves us with no clear answer to questions such as these its religious value seems to me to halt and fail. If you set up a great religious theory, involving mighty miracles and tremendous presuppositions, you should at least make that theory complete. A religious *Weltanschauung*, which intellectually and morally is fraught with difficulty, should at least be co-extensive with the world which it seeks to interpret. If in crucial points of urgency and moment, it leaves us in the lurch and in the dark, if it not only does not satisfactorily explain the facts of history and human nature, but even ignores them, its religious value, both theoretically and practically, is, I venture to think, most seriously impaired.

We pass from these unexplained and unsolved difficulties to consider how "eternal life," in the bestowal of which are contained both the prerogative and the mission of Christ, is won, and wherein it consists. So far as it is bestowed *ab extra*, as a gift from without, it does not concern us. So far as it is conditioned by the fact of Christ's death and by a participation in baptism and the eucharist, it also lies outside our sphere. Whatever spiritual meanings the author attached to these material processes, he would apparently have believed that they exercised upon the rightly disposed person a special and semi-miraculous influence. He would probably have objected to any abolition of these ceremonies, just as Philo objected to a merely spiritual interpretation of the Pentateuchal laws.<sup>2</sup> But the details of his views do not affect our present enquiry, just as the degree of atoning or sanctifying efficacy which he assigned to the death of Christ is of little importance to the outsider

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<sup>1</sup> *Seat of Authority in Religion*, p. 439, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Pfleiderer, *Das Urchristenthum*, p. 774.



except historically. What we want to know is how this eternal life can be won by man. We have already seen that the attainment of it is, partially at any rate, predetermined. Those who have not the spiritual germ within them can not be quickened by the spiritual sun. For them darkness is light and light is darkness. The opportunity of salvation to the one class is but the means of completer damnation to the other. Therefore it is that the "judgment" of Christ is one of sifting: the rejected become worse and worse as the light shines brighter and brighter. But in addition to all this, human effort is needed for the acquisition of life eternal, and there is a method by which it can be won. This may not be wholly logical, but it is certainly more in accordance with experience and fact. So in Philo all spiritual attainment is due to the grace of God, and Philo's insistence on this point, implying man's incapacity to move upward without divine help and the necessity of humility, is quite parallel to John v. 41-44 and vii. 18; but, nevertheless, there is room and need for moral effort and endeavour. You are reborn by the spirit, and the spirit is given you from above; and yet you may struggle to attain the spirit, or at any rate to develop the potentialities of the divine gift. Any obscurity and inconsistency here need not surprise us: no one can precisely allocate to man and God their exact share in the moral and religious development of the human character. Yet most religious persons feel that there are both human and divine agencies helping towards the ultimate product.

Now, in most of the higher religions, the attainment of the best life is supposed to depend upon two main elements. One of these elements is moral and one is religious. These separations are somewhat misleading, but nevertheless they have their uses. The elements may also be described thus: eternal life is partly won by works and partly by faith.

Which element comes first in time and in importance? The modern and Jewish view is that the ethical element

comes first. What society needs is the most developed goodness ; with what fashions and dogmas of religious belief this goodness is combined is of inferior moment. *That* belief is of the greatest value to society which has the best ethical effect upon its believers. Moreover, we recognise that in faith, do and say what we will, there does enter an intellectual element which is not wholly under the control of our will. We are aware, though Philo was not, that a man may be very good who is an Atheist or an Agnostic, though we are far from thinking that society would not morally degenerate if Atheism and Agnosticism were immensely to increase. That we become good by doing good is still true. And the content of "life eternal" is interpenetrated by morality. Remove morality and it is vague, ascetic, selfish—a refined egoism.

But this ethical element is not unaffected by the other element, which consists in man's attitude towards God, in his belief in him, his love of him, his more or less constant sense of his abiding omnipresence. "*Solet enim dei amator illico etiam hominum amator esse.*" Yet while these two elements influence and interact upon each other, we feel that the primary one of the two is morality. If we may separate inseparables, we might say: Through morality to religion.

And in the Fourth Gospel the need of these two elements is also recognised. But, on the whole, the emphasis seems placed on the wrong factor, on faith rather than on morality. Through religion to morality, rather than through morality to religion, is the tendency of the Gospel. In this respect, the First Epistle of St. John takes a saner and more ethical line. But both Gospel and Epistle incline to identify the one element with the other or to gloss over the difference between them.

As we have already seen, the man who believes in Christ is at least potentially good. The bad man is an unbeliever, and even the reverse holds also true—the unbeliever is a bad man. Now, apart from his metaphysical

and *à priori* dualism, what reason has the Evangelist to say that the unbeliever is morally bad? "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light." "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." The second quotation seems, with doubtful consistency, to imply that even in spite of sin, belief may be won and sin destroyed (cp. v. 14). You might argue that only those who were hardened to goodness could be insensible to the moral beauty of Christ's words, or doubt that he was inspired. The argument is plausible though not convincing. But even if admitted, it does not suit the case. For what the moral beauty of Christ's words can never prove is that the speaker of them was metaphysically connected with Deity, the Incarnation of the eternal Word.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, also true that the Gospel teaches morality as the condition precedent of faith. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light." "He that keepeth my commands, loveth me." And this teaching is wholesome and sound. Let God and duty prove themselves to you in your life by living on as if they truly were.<sup>2</sup> The Epistle is more definite still on this point. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar"; through the love of man we pass to the love of God. Practically this teaching comes to this: theoretic belief is of no spiritual value; the test of true faith is that it should rest on a moral basis and issue in a moral life. Through morality to religion, and when there, from religion to morality. These excellent utterances of the Epistle (*e.g.*,

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. Chavannes' *La Religion dans la Bible*, II. p. 183 :—"Certes Jésus me révèle la véritable vie ; mais en quoi cela me prouve-t-il qu'il est un être divin incarné ? Pourquoi veut-on absolument que je le croie pour aimer la vie qui mène à Dieu ? . . . Cette théosophie est un hors-d'œuvre dangereux. C'est elle qui est cause que notre auteur se soit si malheureusement exprimé, par exemple, lorsqu'il écrivait : 'Quiconque croit que Jésus est le Christ, est né de Dieu.'"

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Green, "Address on Faith." *Works*, III., p. 273.

"whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, and he that loveth not knoweth not God"), suffice to give it value to the outsider as to the insider, to the Jew as to the Christian.

But, as we have seen, neither Epistle nor Gospel stops there. They do not merely say, morality shall be the test of your faith, and the method by which you reach it. They have led the way to the dangerous doctrine that unbelief is necessarily as much moral as intellectual. If you can win faith by goodness, you miss it because of vice. The unbeliever is a sinner. It seems to me that for the terrible consequences of this doctrine, the Johannine writings are partially responsible. Their matchless beauty tends to hide the danger and the cruelty of the doctrine which they preach. For let us pass from the work of a great genius such as the Fourth Gospel to the writings of a soulless fanatic, and what do we find there? The fanatic would be reprobated now by all; nevertheless, views such as his have had great influence in the world, and if he had been asked to justify them, he could have quoted the Fourth Gospel with great cogency and aptitude for his uncharitable purpose. That Gospel undoubtedly maintains that moral evil is the root of unbelief. And is not this what Dr. Cumming, as quoted by George Eliot, in that striking essay of hers, on Evangelical Teaching, in the *Westminster Review* of October, 1855, also maintained?

I once met with an acute and enlightened infidel, with whom I reasoned day after day, and for hours together; I submitted to him the internal, the external, and the experimental evidences, but made no impression on his scorn and unbelief. At length I entertained a suspicion that there was something morally, rather than intellectually wrong, and that the bias was not in the intellect, but in the heart. One day, therefore, I said to him: "I must now state my conviction, and you may call me uncharitable, but duty compels me; you are living in some known and gross sin." The man's countenance became pale; he bowed, and left me.

One point more. The author of the First Epistle of St. John is urgent to impress upon his readers the importance

of morality. In simple adages of great power and beauty he preaches, as we have seen, the noble doctrine that the doer of righteousness is begotten of God, and that the lover of God must be also a lover of man. But there is another side to this picture. Even with him the element of faith frequently overcomes and predominates over the element of morality. That he should be blind to goodness outside his own community is natural. But what of the sinners within its pale? He cannot consistently maintain the paradox that the man who calls himself a Christian is not a Christian if he be a sinner. It conflicts with language and experience. He therefore equivocates. The Christian sins, but it is a "sin not unto death." What is a sin unto death? It is clearly apostasy. Therefore the intellectual sin of abandoning a belief in Christ would seem to be more unpardonable in the author's eyes than a moral sin of indefinite intensity. Here again we are confronted with a false doctrine which has worked grievous evil in the history of the world. The believer's sins are judged by a different standard from the sins of his unbelieving neighbour. No longer "Ye are my people: *therefore* will I visit upon you all your iniquities." But rather, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; and whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin." The individual who is proudly conscious that he so believes and is so begotten, may rapidly become convinced that he is incapable of sin. Take care of your faith, and your deeds will take care of themselves—a perversion doubtless of the Epistle's general doctrine, but not without possible support from the ambiguous language of a document which exalts faith at the expense of morality even while it attempts indissolubly to combine the two.<sup>1</sup>

The content of eternal life, according to the Fourth Gospel, we have already heard defined as the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ, the Divine Word

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. Chavannes' *La Religion dans la Bible*, p. 184.

made flesh. But it would be improper to infer from this single passage that no ethical elements entered into its composition. With equal or greater injustice the same attack might be made on Philo when he defines this life as a taking refuge with the true God (*ἡ πρὸς τὸ ὄν καταφυγή*); or where in many other similar passages he gives to it an exclusively religious character. The moral element is certainly not wanting in the Fourth Evangelist, though by the very purpose and object of his Gospel moral teaching as such is very slightly dwelt upon. But in the flush and glow of his spiritual enthusiasm, faith in Christ seemed necessarily to involve a regeneration of the whole man. Man receives by it the fullest truth and highest knowledge, and it so transforms his character as to bring out its best and divinest possibilities. Personal devotion and emotional love are part and parcel of that knowledge of the Son and of the Father wherein life eternal consists. To-day we are bound to separate, at least in language, our moral and religious life more clearly, and the intellectual element in "faith," through its very difficulty, presses itself the more strongly and distinctly upon our attention.

All the same, the ethics of the Fourth Gospel are certainly its least original part. If you subtract all that seems a reproduction of Paul and all that seems a reproduction of Philo, you have little left that is at once admirable and new. So, for example, with the conception of spiritual freedom and the slavery of sin (viii. 31-36). So also, in the main, with the conception of self-glory as preventing the possibility of spiritual enlightenment. As with Socrates the vain man who thinks he knows but is really ignorant is intellectually hopeless and helpless, so to our Evangelist they who love the glory of men more than the glory of God are also those who think they see but are really blind. "If they were blind they would have no sin; but now they say We see; therefore their sin remaineth." To this conception also there are

several parallels, both in the Epistles of Paul and in the treatises of Philo.

Yet everyone who reads the Gospel and Epistles of St. John with a fair measure of sympathy, will probably find in them a certain ethical elevation. They are not only spiritual in religion, but also in morality. And when in this essay the word "morality" has been used, and all things in heaven and earth have been appraised by a moral standard, I have always had in mind the fullest connotation that could possibly be given to this expansive term. I was not thinking only of mere work-a-day and *bourgeois* morality (though this, as Rauwenhoff says, includes a good part of man's moral worth), but of the morality which is exhibited in self-sacrifice and devotion. Morality does not stop short of love; and, though the highest morality to our modern notions does not consort with useless asceticism or isolation, it does, I should imagine, always include that antagonism to the "world," in one specific and spiritual sense, which is characteristic of the Johannine writings. The precise meaning which their authors gave to the word *κόσμος* has doubtless passed away. We do not approve their antithesis between this world and another world when they mean by it that this world is under the sway of diabolic agencies. Nevertheless, softened and modified though our notions of the "world" may be, there is a sense in which we do find ethical meaning and religious value in the famous sentences: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." So far as these words are true, they are true for those without, as well as for those within, the limits of Christianity; and, seeing that the measure of abiding truth which they con-

tain is nowhere else, to my knowledge, more simply and effectively expressed, the outsider, as well as the insider, may rightly render them both gratitude and admiration.

Ethics certainly owes more to the Epistle than to the Gospel. It is undoubtedly true that in the long speeches in the Gospel, "the ethical teaching of the Synoptic Christ falls wholly into the background."<sup>1</sup> Not unconnected, I should imagine, with this lack of ethics is another fact pointed out by the same acute commentator, that the predominance of the Fourth Gospel in the Christian Church has regularly produced a tendency to asceticism and mysticism, from the days of Clement of Alexandria to those of Schleiermacher.<sup>2</sup> The one positive moral command of the Johannine Christ is that contained in the word *ἀγάπη*, or love. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." But is not this, it may pertinently be asked, sufficient and all inclusive?

Without attempting to depreciate in a nasty or grudging spirit the value of so famous an injunction, it must be pointed out that this love is merely reciprocal. It is restricted to the fellow disciple, and is thus in sharp and violent contrast to the bidding of the Synoptic Jesus. The particularism of race is exchanged for the new and more dangerous particularism of creed. Leviticus xix. 18 is perhaps supplemented by Luke x. 33, and enlarged by Matthew v. 44; it is not improved by John xiii. 34. That is no new command which does not go beyond the old. Enlargement fulfils, and therefore Matthew v. 44 does not (it may be contended) contradict Matthew v. 17, but John xiii. 34 is not only in conflict with Leviticus xix. 18, but with Matthew v. 17 as well. And the supplementary

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<sup>1</sup> "Die sittliche Verkündigung des synoptischen Christus tritt vollkommen in ihnen zurück." (O. Holtzmann, p. 89.)

<sup>2</sup> "Das Hervorheben des johanneischen Christusbildes vor dem synoptischen hatte in der Kirche regelmässig ein Ueberwiegen des weltfremden Lebens der Christen zur Folge, in Askese und Mystik, von Clemens Alexandrinus an bis auf Schleiermacher und Luthardt." (O. Holtzmann, p. 136.)



command of Leviticus xix. 34 finds no parallel in St. John. The stranger in creed need not be loved. Too accurately has Christianity recognised the difference: too closely has she followed the Christ of the Fourth Gospel rather than the Christ of the First.

Nevertheless within the limit of the brotherhood, the force and beauty with which the command of love is urged and emphasized, cannot be gainsaid. All of us may be grateful for such passages, and can apply them in our own way. As a picture of the love which lays upon itself willingly the lowliest duties, the scene where Christ washes the feet of his disciples will always retain its power. This service of love is to rise to the heights of sacrifice. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But it is again characteristic of the Evangelist that whereas to Paul the supremacy of Christ's sacrifice consisted in his dying for sinners, those whom his death benefits in the Fourth Gospel are no longer ἀσεβείς, but φῦλοι, not the ungodly, but the good. The dualism is preserved unto the end.

One integral portion of the Evangelist's conception of love has thus far been omitted. The followers of Christ are to love one another. But wherefore? By what force or example is this love to be set in motion, stimulated, maintained? Here we come to the great and distinctive ethical motive characteristic of the Fourth Gospel. The love of man to man is conditioned by the love of man for Christ, and of Christ for man. It may also be said to be partly conditioned by the love of God both for Christ and man. (But we must always remember that neither God nor Christ has love for the man who will not or cannot be saved by faith in the Incarnate Son.)

No outsider would dream for a moment of denying the ethical power which the love of man for Christ and the belief in the love of Christ for man have exercised in human history. This is not the place to consider how far that power can be, has been, or is supplied by Judaism with its more direct

appeal and immediate relationship to God the Father. It is probably harder to love God, and to feel the joy of loving him, than to love Christ; and it must not be forgotten that this emotional feeling of love and of joy in loving—reaching up to and passing into a mystic feeling of union and communion with the beloved and Divine object—may, within certain limits, have excellent ethical results. Now, as Rauwenhoff has so clearly pointed out, every excitement of feeling, however noble the feeling may be, partakes to some extent of the character of enjoyment. This enjoyment is easier if the spiritual is clothed in sensuous forms. An image impresses us much more keenly than an abstract conception. For how, he adds, could the worship of Jesus and the worship of Mary have so obscured the worship of God in Christianity if it were not that the humanised God appeals so much more to the feelings than the Infinite One? <sup>1</sup>

It is certainly true that one element in the love of Christ and also in the conception of God, produced by the Christian theory, can never be filled up by concentrating our love upon God alone. It is the element of sacrifice. Christians are convinced of God's love for man, because he sent his Son to save them. They love God the more because they think he so sacrificed himself. And the exemplar of human love is given them to all time in the divine sacrifice of Christ. It has been said in this Review by a gentle and gifted Christian writer, that if we say that self-sacrifice is the greatest of the virtues, but that it has not been or cannot be displayed by God, then God's character is less noble than man's. This argument appears to me to assimilate the divine and the human nature too closely. To resist temptation is a human virtue, but it cannot be attributed to God: the same might be said of other virtues that imply effort. Is there not still a truth in the Aristotelian dictum, that we praise virtue (and virtue is

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<sup>1</sup> Rauwenhoff, *Wijsbegeerte van den Godsdienst*, 1887, pp. 175, 176 (German translation, p. 117).

human), τοὺς θεοὺς δὲ μακαρίζομεν? At any rate the "inner contradiction" of which Hausrath speaks in the conception of a being who is *both* God *and* man, the vivid feeling that "human life becomes an empty phantom (*ein leerer Schein*) if it is lived by a God," prevent those who stand without the Christian pale from realising how the notion of a Divine sacrifice, offered at a given moment in time and once for all, can be assimilated with the idea of God, or what exact meaning it can convey.<sup>1</sup>

It may be questioned whether the Fourth Gospel, though it lays so much stress upon the love which Christ bore to his disciples, has been the Gospel which has chiefly contributed to create that wonderful figure of the pitying and suffering martyr, the divine ideal of humanity, in whom so many countless souls have found comfort in trouble, strength in temptation, light in darkness, and love amid hate. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Such sayings, and others like them, are more characteristic of the Synoptic than of the Johannine Christ. Are they not also more characteristic of a conception of Christ in which he reveals the love of God and the "divine image" of man, inasmuch as, though inspired, he was, nevertheless, human, and not God himself, incarnate and complete? It would be very interesting to consider what share the human or Unitarian conception has really had in the motive power for good which the worship and love of Christ have produced in the course of the ages. Or is that motive power dependent upon a belief in his absolute divinity? Can we have no Father Damians without the Incarnation?

Putting these ultimate questions on one side, let us note some peculiar features of the Fourth Gospel's conception of human and divine love, and how these are partially modified in the first Epistle. In the Gospel the Logos, still more than in Philo, occupies the position of intermediary

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. Hausrath, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, iv., p. 493, *fin*.

between God and man. Through the Son to the Father ; other approach there is none. Where such a theory is merely metaphysical, as we may say it is in Philo—for whom the aspect of Deity revealed in the Logos is the means whereby man may ultimately pass to the fuller knowledge and love of the absolute God—it is not objectionable. The danger of its presentment in the Fourth Gospel is that the Logos is no longer merely a philosophical aspect of God, but a “person” in our modern sense of the word, who became flesh for a definite period of time. If you say “only through the Son to the Father” with this definite and personalised sense attaching to the Son, you run near to saying that the Father cannot be known except by those who may have heard of, and hearing may believe in, the dogma of the pre-existent, incarnate and resurrected Son. And this implies, as it seems to me, an improper and intolerant limitation of the knowledge and love of God to the followers of a particular creed.

In the Gospel the love of the Father is mainly directed to the Son. That love is insisted on several times with marked emphasis. On the other hand, the love of the Son for the Father is only once alluded to (xiv. 31). The love of the Son is directed mainly to his disciples. The love of the disciples is directed to the Son. The love of God by man is only once alluded to (v. 42). The object of Christian love in this Gospel is not the Father, but the Son. Yet it is only fair to say that the Father’s love for those who are capable of loving the Son, and hence of winning life eternal, is the motive of the incarnation. “He that loveth the Son will be loved of the Father. The Father loveth you because ye have loved the Son.” Finally the love of the Son for them conditions and causes the love of the disciples for each other. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; even as I loved you, that ye may also love one another.”

In contrast with this markedly mediatorial position of

the Son in the Gospel stands the relation of the believer to God in the Epistle. That relation is more immediate, and therefore more sympathetic with the Jewish point of view. Professor Pfeiderer would, of course, be outraged to hear that what he calls, "*die tiefsinnige Erfassung des Kernes der christlichen Religion*," and the immediate relation of the human soul to the Divine Father—*enger und einfacher* in the Epistle than in the Gospel—is essentially Jewish. And yet, outraged as he and his friends would be by such a statement (as if Rabbinic Jews could possibly know anything of an immediate love of God by the individual believer), it is nevertheless strictly true. Moreover, this love of God is brought into direct relation with the love of man. None can love God if he love not his brother. When Professor Pfeiderer asks whether it would not have been possible for the Church to have abided by the teaching of the Epistle in this respect, and whether it could not have thus avoided many quarrels, useless alike for piety and for morality, his Jewish readers are in full accord with him.<sup>1</sup> Such has ever been the contention of Judaism, to put no separable divine "person" between man and God. It is running on the same unconsciously Jewish lines when Cone, quoting and following Pfeiderer, remarks that the author of the Epistle "establishes an immediate relation of the soul to God, which Christian theologians since Paul have unhappily disregarded, apparently solicitous lest the person of Christ should not be sufficiently exalted and his mediatorial office magnified."<sup>2</sup>

One more characteristic and essential feature of "life eternal," according to the Johannine conception of it, remains. That element may fitly be called mystic. It is the glad and keen consciousness of God and of his love, the sense of nearness to him, by our being in him and his being in us, which is often supposed to constitute

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<sup>1</sup> Pfeiderer, *Das Urchristenthum*, p. 799.

<sup>2</sup> Cone, p. 326.

the core of the inner religious life. In the Fourth Gospel this consciousness is once more strictly limited to the Christian believer. It is so limited because it partly depends on a definite and supernatural act, namely, the bestowal of the Spirit to the disciples after the death of Christ. The gift of that Spirit is not granted in various measures to those who seek God by many creeds and divers pathways. It is rigidly restricted to those who seek the Father through the adoration of the Son. They only are capable (through their incipient spiritual nature) of receiving it. It is therefore necessary, before the doctrine of the Fourth Gospel can be appreciated by the outsider, to disentangle it of the narrow and circumscribing form in which it is presented. As it stands, it is too closely connected with a miraculous dispensation of a supernatural gift at a particular season, and too limited in its application and its sphere, to be true generally and for all time. The parallel presentment of the theory in Philo may be arid and rhetorical, yet it is more human, because it is consonant with a variety of creeds. Many of those who have extolled the Johannine mysticism seem to forget its narrowness. But mysticism above all things should be broadly human.

It is "the intimate relation between God and man" which the Fourth Gospel teaches—at least for the believer. "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." "I will pray the Father, and he will give you . . . the spirit of truth . . . he abideth with you, and shall be in you." "Even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; . . . that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them"—in other words, God's immanence in man, and man's glad consciousness of that immanence and love of it.

As an introduction to the study of this subject, many people might find it useful to read those pages of Rauwenhoff's book which deal with what he calls the Psychological Forms of Religion, Intellectualism, Mysticism, and "Moralism."<sup>1</sup> To the Understanding, to the Feelings (or rather to *Gemüt*), and to the Will, are there assigned their proper part and function both in the religious history of the past, and in the religious life of the individual. He shows that of these three forms, "Moralism," which lays the stress of religious life on moral action, is on the whole the most important and the most wholesome.

Judged from the outside, moralism presents little attraction, especially when compared with mysticism (*Mystik*). Putting aside everything which savours of emotion, God is considered as the supreme Lawgiver, and the test of piety is exclusively sought for in virtue. Man's future is usually regarded as a reward or retribution of the use to which he has put his life on earth.<sup>2</sup>

There is an undoubted onesidedness in "Moralism," but nevertheless that onesidedness is not religiously so dangerous as the onesidedness of "Intellectualism" and "Mysticism."

In a onesided emphasis of Morality lies an adequate means to prevent the practical character of religion being misconceived --an error into which "intellectualism" so readily falls--and at the same time a means to prevent religion being made sensuous, which is the besetting danger of mysticism. If for a "Moralist" religious life becomes little more than a discharge of what he thinks to be his duty, he is at least preserved both from sterile orthodoxy and from an immoral running riot of the religious emotions. The discipline of the moral consciousness may never lead to the sunny heights, whereon the purest life of religious sentiment is passed: it keeps men at any rate upon the right path. No such sins can be charged to the school of Kant as to the school of Calvin or of Spener.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pp. 109—124, in the German translation.

<sup>2</sup> Rauwenhoff, p. 180, German translation, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Rauwenhoff, p. 182, German translation, p. 122.

Nevertheless, religion needs and implies something more than mere "moralism" can supply :—

The one-sided conception of religion as a sanctifying power which acts upon the will is unable to perceive that there is also something else in religion which can never be dispensed with without harm. The *unio mystica*, the yearning of the heart to a more intimate relation with Deity, for that "Thou in me and I in thee," which forms the fundamental thought of the theology of the Fourth Gospel, may easily lead the way to hurtful aberrations. It, nevertheless, always remains a truly religious phenomenon and an essential constituent of the normally-developed religious life. To this mystic union and yearning, "moralism," to its own great loss, can do no justice ; for it thereby fails to realise that in these emotions lies the great motive which lifts morality above legalism, and so ennobles the consciousness of duty till it becomes a mighty impulse and passion towards moral perfection. "Thou shalt" will presumably always remain the basis of all morality ; but when religion transforms it into "God wills," and God is no longer a mere lawgiver, but the object of heartfelt love and spiritual desire, you reach the "*Da quod jubes et jube quod vis*," which unites religion and morality, and brings morality to its highest possible perfection.<sup>1</sup>

This *unio mystica* of which Rauwenhoff here speaks is the source or the content of those blissful experiences wherein, according to Oscar Holtzmann, the perennial value of the Fourth Gospel consists. He says :—

The blissful experiences which Christ declares concerning himself in Matthew xi. 25-30, and to which Paul briefly alludes (Gal. ii. 20), are described in the Fourth Gospel as the permanent possession of the Christian community (x. 14, xiv. 20-24, xv. 10, 11-15, xvi. 12-15, 33). They are, in short, the experiences which accrue to the individual from his consciousness of the love of God and the redemption through Christ. In its expression of this thought lies, to my idea, the absolute and eternal value of the Johannine Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Now, if Rauwenhoff be right, and if the yearning of the spirit towards a closer relation and communion with God be in truth an essential constituent of the properly developed religious life, the presentment of that yearning and of its

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<sup>1</sup> Rauwenhoff, p. 181 ; German Translation, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Johannesevangelium*, p. 90.



satisfaction in the Fourth Gospel will probably always retain its attraction and its value, however unnecessary and even intolerable Jews and Theists may find it to split up the Deity into two so markedly personal aspects as the Father and the Son, and however repugnant it may be to them to put any mediatorial agency—human and divine in one—between the human soul and God. Philo's less personal Logos is in this respect far more universal and less restrictive than the Johannine Christ.

"Nearer, my God, to thee" is a true and fundamental feeling of the religious mind. Their sense of the nearness of God is the stepping stone on which men have risen to the consciousness of the "*Unio mystica*." This nearness is fully recognised and asserted in the Hebrew Scriptures. God is described as near, because, in the first place, he is lovingly omniscient. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

This certainty of God's saving solicitude, his ever present and watchful care of those who pray to him in truth, passes over into a glad sense of communion. It is not merely that the Old Testament psalmist believed in God's *protective* nearness, but he also felt that nearness as a possession and a joy. This feeling was partly, as we know, conditioned by the Temple, but it was perfectly real, and it reaches classic and forcible expression in such Psalms as the 63rd, the 73rd, the 84th, and several others. It is quite a mistake to suppose that this living sense of communion with God was lost by the Rabbis. Both in the Old Testament and in the Talmud it is, however, purely popular. It has not been given any foundation in religious psychology or metaphysics, showing how this sense of communion *with* God and nearness *of* God is based upon a theory of man's nature and God's immanence. It could, as I imagine, only receive such a foundation by the fructifying contact of Greek philosophy.

And I believe that it is this union of practical Hebrew religiousness with Greek philosophy which has produced that religious mysticism, that idea of "Thou in me and I in thee," which constitutes a main conception of the Fourth Gospel. So, too, in the famous speech attributed to St. Paul in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, we may notice, I believe, this union of Greek and Hebrew. "That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us," is a Hebrew thought, hardly going beyond what might have been said by a Psalmist or a Rabbi. But the philosophical justification of the divine nearness passes beyond the Hebraic limit. And it is just this philosophic justification which is, to our modern notion, the kernel or essence of the whole—*ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν*: "In him we live and move and have our being." It may be noted that J. Holtzmann in his Commentary cites a curious parallel from the Greek rhetorician Dion Chrysostom. One could, perhaps, find other parallels in Philo.

The Hebrew had no definite theory of man's nature or of God's ubiquity. He was not in the least disturbed by any philosophical difficulties about a God outside the world who must be "far" from man. He had no difficulty in finding God: or rather he had no doubt as to the road. Through goodness unto God: but not through perfection. Pride stood in the way: to the repentant sinner the path lay open. "To them that repent he granteth a return, and he cheereth them that fail in hope." He had no theory of God being within him and of himself being in God, but without the theory he practically realised its results.

I do not say that for the Jew reared mainly on the Old Testament, the Liturgy and Rabbinical excerpts, there is nothing in this respect to be gained from Philo and the Fourth Gospel. We want the justification as well as the simpler and more popular expressions of that faith which it seeks to justify. Nor can we afford to lose this union

of Greek and Hebrew thought as exemplified in the Johannine Gospel. For it is no mere union : it is religious genius working upon its twofold material with majestic effect and thrilling beauty. Nor again would I for a moment deny that, owing to the absence of this union between Greek and Hebrew, and also to the greater difficulty of loving God and feeling him near than of loving and feeling near the less abstract Christ, the Jewish religion, at any rate from the days of Moses Mendelssohn, the rationalist, has been somewhat exposed to the dangers of "Moralism." Hence it is that a sympathetic study of the Johannine writings may help some of us (without the least infraction of our purer monotheism) to a more vivid and habitual sense of communion between ourselves and God, and a keener consciousness of the Divine presence.

Dr. Martineau, the great Unitarian philosopher and divine, goes further than this, and becomes, as I think, not only unjust to the Judaism, whether Palestinian or Hellenistic, which had preceded Christianity, but exaggerates the debt we owe to the Fourth Gospel itself. In the Johannine theology he tells us "there is contained one vital element, which, however questionably reached, transcends in truth and power the level of the Synoptists' Gospel."

It so construes the personality of Christ, so avails itself of his characteristics, as to abolish the difference of essence between the Divine and the human nature, and substitute for the obedience of dependence the sympathy of likeness and the fellowship of trust. In appearance, it unites the qualities of God and man in *one* case only, and centres the blended glory in a single incarnation. But there it does not end. The unexampled spectacle of such "grace and truth," of heavenly sanctity penetrating all human experiences, startles and wins hearts that never were so drawn before, and wakes in them a capacity for that which they reverence in another. This attraction of affinity there could not be, were there not divine possibilities secreted and a divine persuasion pleading in each soul. There cannot be a chasm of forbidding antipathy and alienation, rendering for ever inaccessible to man the very "beauty of holiness" which he already adores ; nor is there any hindering curse to be bought off, before he can enter on the new life of self-consecration. There is no longer

need of despair at the seemingly hopeless task of climbing the heavens and finding the unapproachable God. For He himself comes unsought, and lifts the latch of our nature when we thought the door was shut, and makes his abode with us (John xiv. 23), seeking us with his love, finding us with his truth, and claiming us with his righteousness. Thus does the Paraclete perpetuate and universalise the impersonation of the Son of God in the Son of Man, and carry it through the spiritual history of the world, and convert the life of Humanity itself into a Theophany.<sup>1</sup>

He emphasizes the newness of the Johannine teaching in another passage more definitely still—

And so the great end is reached, that the mingling of the Divine and the human in Christ is not there on its own account, as a gem of individual biography, unique and unrepeated; but as the type and the expression of a fact in the constitution of our nature. The intimate relation between God and man, which declared itself in the utterance, "I am not alone, but the Father is with me," belongs to the essence of the soul and consecrates every human life. Nor is it anything but simple and indisputable truth to say that the consciousness of this has taken its commencement from the experience and religion of Jesus, and has imparted to Christendom its deeper tone of feeling, its higher conception of purity, and its inextinguishable hope for humanity.<sup>2</sup>

Now I think it is nothing but "simple and indisputable truth" to *deny* that the consciousness of the intimate relation between God and man took its commencement from the experience and religion of Jesus. He probably felt that relation with intense keenness, but the relation itself, as a known joy and satisfaction, is far older. It existed among the men who wrote the Psalter, and, *mirabile dictu*, it existed among the men who wrote the Talmud. "The chasm of forbidding antipathy and alienation, the hindering curse to be bought off," never existed for the Jewish consciousness at all, and therefore it was not the Fourth, or any other Gospel, which did away with them. There never existed as a dominant feature in the Jewish religion, from Isaiah to Jesus, or from Jesus to Mendels-

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<sup>1</sup> *Seat of Authority*, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509.

sohn, any "despair at the seemingly hopeless task of climbing the heavens, and finding the unapproachable God." Therefore, it was not the Fourth, or any other Gospel, which had to annul a non-existent despair.

Whether we indeed can say that there is no difference of essence between the Divine and the human nature, so that we should be grateful to the Fourth Gospel for abolishing it, is another and more doubtful question. So far as this merely means that "there are divine (*i.e.* rational) possibilities secreted and a divine persuasion pleading in each soul," that there is an affinity between the human and the divine reason, and *therefore* between human and divine goodness, we may admit it; but in that case the double theory of the Fourth Gospel, first, that only a select number of men possess this affinity, and secondly, that the sense of it was never awakened and the power of it never realized before the teaching of Christ, or since his advent by unbelievers, is wholly and radically false. When, therefore, it is said of the Fourth Gospel that it is *one* writing out of others, which teaches this affinity and its possible issues, however "questionable" the manner of its presentment of the doctrine may be, we accept and register the claim. But when the discovery and the sense of glad communion with God, and of the intimate relation between the human and the divine, is asserted to be the patent and prerogative of one religion only and of a single book, we are bound to demur and to protest. We render our homage to the genius of the Fourth Evangelist: we recognise his great contribution to the spiritual store of humanity, but, in homely, though pregnant language, we must not give him more than his due, nor in order to pay our debt of gratitude to the Hellenistic Christian, rob the Jew, whether from Palestine or Alexandria, of all we owe him and still shall owe.

Of the Fourth Gospel an outsider can say and feel what a student of philosophy can feel and say of the great philosophers. Such a student may learn and profit from

them all, though he be a disciple and follower of none. So Dr. Martineau says of the philosophers whose teachings he expounds so lucidly in his *Ethical Theories*, that there is none to whom he is not grateful for intellectual service or delight. So to the outsider a great work of genius such as the Fourth Gospel must always be suggestive, helpful, stimulating. There must be many ways of expressing the inexpressible, many ways, in other words, of setting forth by and to our human minds the nature of God and of his relation to man. One way will seem truer to us than another, but the less true in one respect may be the more true in another; and in whatever form a theory of God may be presented, and however unacceptable it may seem, it may yet contain aspects and germs of valuable truth, which in another form, though, as a whole, purer and truer, are either wanting or less prominent. So from the doctrine of the Logos, as it is presented to us both by Philo and the Fourth Evangelist, we may find something to learn and to cherish, some religious profit and truth for the nurture and benefit of our souls. The Logos of Philo is more abstract, but also more impersonal; far less capable of rousing emotion and enthusiasm, but at the same time less invasive of the Divine unity. There is nothing in the Philonic Logos to stimulate affection or move to self-sacrifice; no ideal of love and pity to imitate and adore; but at the same time no devolution of the Divine perfections upon any aspect of Deity separate or separable from the self-sufficient and infinite Father. For these reasons the two presentments of the Logos theory have, for the outsider, each its own merits and each its own defects. The identification of the Logos with Jesus, and the plenary incarnation of the Godhead in the person of Christ, were fraught, as it seems to him, with peculiar danger. The Jew as well as the Unitarian can, I should imagine, largely appreciate and concur in the judgment of Dr. Mackintosh, who says:—

The moment the Church, by recognising the divinity of Christ,

abandoned the position of monotheism pure and simple, it placed itself on an inclined plane, or on what a popular preacher has called the "down grade"; and that it should descend, sooner or later, to the worship of the Virgin and the saints was inevitable. Nothing but the evangelic doctrine in its purity and freshness—the living conception of God as our heavenly Father—could deliver the soul of man from the spirit of fear and diffidence before the Unseen Power so as to enable it to dispense with the Logos idea, and, consequently, with all inferior and subordinate agents of the divine will. The monotheistic doctrine, in its physical or non-moral aspects, is to this day, and always has been, the strength of Mahometanism. In the moral and humane aspect of it, as presented by Jesus, it has yet to prove the strength of Christianity by the overthrow of all competing cults, and of superstition in every shape.<sup>1</sup>

But this moral and humane aspect of the monotheistic doctrine is nothing but the purest Judaism. What seems to one student a return to the best and earliest Christian teaching seems to another a return to the best and most developed presentation of Judaism. The doctrine of Jesus may be regarded either as pure Christianity or pure Judaism. Either way of looking at it contains a truth.

Nevertheless, though men may possibly learn to dispense with the "Logos-idea," they will scarcely without detriment to the richness and variety of their religious life, dispense with some of the thoughts which it fostered and diffused. To the Jew the Evangelist's "Even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" will seem to involve a false and needless subtlety of distinction in the Divine nature. But the Epistle's simpler doctrine: "If we love one another, God abideth in us;" "he that abideth in love, abideth in God, and God abideth in him," remains, and the Jew and the outsider may seek to appropriate and realize its truth as well as the Christian believer. "Love" is more universal than "wisdom," and therefore the Epistle's doctrine is in this sense wider and nobler than the equivalent and parallel teaching of Philo, for whom

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<sup>1</sup> *The Natural History of the Christian Religion.* By Dr. William Mackintosh. 1894. p. 503.

the soul of the wise is inhabited by God. The fool may transcend the philosopher: Parsifal is nearer God than Faust. And with these sayings of the Johannine epistle we may fitly combine the adage of the Acts: "In him we live and move and have our being." For this more abstract statement, which, as we have seen, gives an Hellenic and philosophic justification to the Hebrew idea of God's nearness and omniscience, goes also beyond the notion which it justifies. Its value to many persons consists in this, that without destroying or infringing upon the idea of God's transcendence, it uses the omnipresence of God in such a way as to make man himself contained in that Divine ubiquity. Of course it does not really *explain* the true relation of God to man, and it is liable to perversion. If we are in God, we are a part of God, and if we are a part of God, every aspect of ourselves is equally divine. What then becomes of goodness and sin; and where is their difference? What becomes of human responsibility, without which no moral life is possible, and the facts of morality incapable of explanation? If God is *in* nature, we may try to believe that its horrors are really beneficent, its cruelty imaginary, its malignancy merely apparent; but what we must not try to believe is that our own sin and our own vileness are only apparent too, or that they can be explained away by any theories of "absolute idealism" or of divine immanence. These lead perilously near to many pantheistic aberrations. The Jewish conception of God and of his relation to man will take its stand upon the separate self-consciousness of both man and God. Judaism will, I imagine, thoroughly concur with that splendid chapter of Dr. Martineau's "Study of Religion," in which he deals with Pantheism.

The voluntary nature of moral beings must be saved from Pantheistic absorption, and be left standing, as, within its sphere, a free cause other than the Divine, yet homogeneous with it . . . . Are we then to find God in the sunshine and the rain, and to miss him in our thought, our duty, and our love? Far from it. He is with us



in both ; only in the former it is his *immanent life*, in the latter his *transcendent* with which we are in communion. It is not indeed *He* that, under the mask of our personality, does our thinking, and prays against our temptations, and weeps our tears ; these are truly our own ; but they are in presence of a sympathy free to answer, spirit to spirit, neither merging in the other, but both at one in the same inmost preferences and affections.<sup>1</sup>

But within these limitations, the doctrine, "In him we live and move and have our being," or "Thou in me and I in thee," has still its value. It is a way of expressing this further truth, not only that God helps man as from without, but that in the Psalmist's phrase the Divine Spirit helps him from within. It means that man is only then most free when he may most fitly be called the child of God, and that at his best the difference between his action and the action of God in him falls away. He is then most himself, when he is most at one with God : "Not my work, but God in me." It implies not merely that God, if you are good and humble, helps you in your toil, sustains you in your struggle, and lifts you to himself, but that all your best work and striving are part and parcel of the divine process of things, links in the chain of evolution, lapped round and embraced by the divine infinitude, but yet a portion of it, however infinitesimal, fulfilling its allotted space, and necessary to the whole. It looks away from sin and lust and madness, and thinks only of the good, whether in failure or success, and it finds in this thought of man's best life as lived in God—the everlasting arms beneath us and around—a consolation and a solace, a sustinment and a strength, which no mere outward God, however wise, powerful and good, could possibly inspire.

I feel inclined to ask in conclusion whether there is anything in these selected excellencies of the Johannine writings which is not in full accord with Judaism, or which is out of harmony with the main drift and current of its teaching. The answer, I believe, is "None."

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<sup>1</sup> *Study of Religion*, 2nd ed., Vol. ii., p. 167, 179.

For certainly the spiritual or symbolic use of words like life and death, light and darkness, bread and water, is not un-Jewish. We find it in the Hebrew Scriptures. That "God is a Spirit," is, as we contend, in easier accord with Jewish than with Christian orthodoxy, and the true method of his worship, indicated by the Evangelist, is now as axiomatic in the Jewish as in the Christian Church. If the adage that "God is love," may be looked upon as a brief summing up in three words of such verses as Psalm cxlv. 8 and 9, and other parallel passages; if love is goodness raised to the highest power, then is the doctrine of the Johannine Epistle the doctrine also of the modern Synagogue.

Nor is there any reason why the Immanence of God, so far as we hold it to be true, should not be taught and maintained by Judaism. It suits certain theologians to caricature the Jewish "transcendental" or "outside" God, but Jews need not be irritated by these foolish misrepresentations. So long as we suffer no violation of the Divine unity and spirituality, we are free to teach, as even orthodox Jews throughout the ages have taught, an immanent as well as a transcendent aspect of the Divine Being. So long as we keep rigidly within the limits of Theism, we may include within our conception of God, and of His relation to man, whatever truth we can find in the idea of the "Divine within the human." The oldest historic Theism of the world is serviceable still. And lastly there is one more point in the catalogue of the Fourth Gospel's merits which we may also with, I trust, increasing accuracy, accept as consistent with Judaism—I mean its universalism. Indeed, the Judaism of to-day is far more universal than the Gospel. For we have attained to a universalism of creed, as well as of race, and the famous "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," if we only interpret the Shepherd as God, is nowhere now preached more earnestly than from Jewish pulpits. I trust that in God's own good time it will become a

principle of action, as well as of faith, so that when the bond of race shall be recognised as obsolete, the bond of religion shall wax firmer and still more firm. Community in religious practice shall yet, perchance, be wedded to community in religious belief, and in this union shall lie the Jewish kinship of the future. *Τὸ συγγενὲς οὐχ αἵματι μετρεῖται μόνον, πρυτανευούσης ἀληθείας, ἀλλὰ πράξεων ὁμοιότητι καὶ θήρᾳ τῶν αὐτῶν.* We may well take to heart and apply, with due measure of enlargement and difference, these striking words of the Alexandrian sage.

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NOTE.—From some friendly hands, through which this article passed in proof, I received certain criticisms upon it, of part of which the following is the substance :—

“You are not so sympathetic a critic of the Fourth Gospel as of Paul. Parts of it, at any rate, you interpret in too narrow and literal a way. For example, your judgment of the writer's ethical point of view is not as wide and scholarly as it should be. You touch his weak points, it is true, but you do not distinguish finely in doing so. A fuller attempt to search for the *humanity* of the author, his character, the possible influences round him, and the purpose with which he wrote, would not have altered your main conclusions, but would yet have given a more sympathetic tone to your criticism, and have been more impressive to your readers.

“You isolate the Fourth Gospel too severely ; you criticise it rather too much as if its sayings had been written yesterday for our special edification. Now, in the author's day, there would have been probably far fewer examples of a belief which was a mere intellectual assent, and so, too, the divorce between belief and action would not have been as common as it is now. ‘In the glow of the moment,’ to use your own words, while not forgetting the wideness of God's mercies, a man might yet have asserted that between the believer in Christ and the non-believer, not as a matter of intellect, but in a moral and spiritual sense, the difference was real and wide. It was the very spirituality and idealism of the author which drove him to assume that the whole man was transformed by his belief, so that ‘believer’ and ‘unbeliever’ tended to become synonymous with ‘righteous’ and ‘unrighteous.’ And if, on the other hand, he asserted that only the good could believe, that in a sense is accepted by you also, for you say that the scamp cannot realize God. You seem readily to perceive

and allow for enthusiasm and excitement in Paul, but not in the Fourth Evangelist. But perhaps there is excitement, though of a different kind, in the Evangelist too. It is a sort of intellectual white-heat. Thus throughout it seems as if the criticism was a little harder and cruder than it should, or need have been, because you have not taken a sufficiently historical and understanding view of the whole.

"Perhaps the new truth (as it seemed to him) came upon the writer of the Fourth Gospel like a dazzling blaze of light, which half-blinded him, as Paul, some think, was physically half-blinded, by its very excess of splendour. He looks out, ever after, with what one might perhaps rather oddly call a dualistic vision upon the world. But he was not a philanthropist like Paul. Keenly anxious that the light which he saw should shine throughout the world, he was impatient and incredulous of those who passed it by. Possibly, nevertheless, you might have been more accurate had you shown more tenderness for the man who said so much about love, but who in his intense antagonism to sin, or to what he too rashly thought sin, seemed unable, or was afraid to let love come in."

How far this criticism is cogent I cannot now inquire. It is at any rate interesting and suggestive. Any stray reader of the article will, I am sure, be glad to read its Note.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.

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